DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 317 738 CE 054 458

AUTHOR Philippi, Jorie W.
TITLE School-to-Work Transition for At-Risk Populations: How to Bridge the Gap.
PUB DATE 3 May 89
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Reading Association (New Orleans, LA, May 3, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Basic Skills; *Education Work Relationship; *High Risk Students; *Instructional Design; *Labor Force Development; Learning Strategies; Lifelong Learning; Retraining; School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; *Transfer of Training; *Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

At-risk program participants, those students who are in danger of not making a successful transition from school or preemployment training programs to productive lives, usually remain on the fringes of the economy. Instruction in school-to-work curricula is designed to help students obtain jobs, but seldom addresses the issues of the ongoing use of learning skills required for retaining a job. Teaching the transferable processes that are embedded in basic skill applications, and that are necessary for competent performance of job tasks in the workplace, prepares students for the lifelong learning required for success. By working proactively as partners with the business community and applying the findings of instructional research to curriculum development at the local level, educators can play a major role in shaping the future U.S. work force. (Three figures on applications of reading skills, writing skills, and computation and problem solving skills found in the workplace are included in the paper.) (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED317738

School-to-Work Transition for At-Risk Populations: How to Bridge the Gap

Jorie W. Philippi

Performance Plus Literacy Consultants
7869 Godolphin Dr., Springfield, VA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

May 3, 1989

International Reading Association Annual Conference
New Orleans, LA

CE 054 557

School-to-Work Transition for At-Risk Populations: How to Bridge the Gap

Jorie W. Philippi

At-risk program participants have been defined as those students who are in danger of not successfully transitioning from school or pre-employment training programs to productive lives. Often they are impoverished and members of ethnic minority groups. The youth and adult learners who are classified as "at-risk," frequently drop out of traditional secondary schools before graduation, or scrape through with less than adequate basic skills for functioning in our society. They are often second-chance basic skills and employment training program dropouts, as well. Given their severely curtailed opportunities for success that result from exiting the system, they tend to "drop in" to involvement with substance abuse and criminal activities, and to become statistics in the rising rates of suicides, teen parenting, neglected and abused children, and the homeless. They usually remain on the fringes of our economy-- unemployed or unemployable with minimal participation as consumers.

At the same time, the U.S. workplace is undergoing constant changes. New technology and the desire to maintain a strong, competitive place in the global economy have caused employers to require an increasingly skilled labor force. Entry-level hires, along with retainable, promotable existing workers now need to have skill levels that enable them to be flexible and retrainable. They need to know how to learn and to continue learning throughout their working years. Additionally, they need to be able to master basic skills applications as they are used in the workplace to achieve job survival. Research has demonstrated that these occupational skill applications differ significantly from traditional basic skills taught in the classroom. (See Figures 1 - 3.)

School-to work curriculum normally attempts to motivate secondary students to remain in school until graduation by offering them part-time work and job placement. Pre-employment programs frequently operate with the same instructional components and experiences, substituting a basic skills or GED prep section of curriculum for the secondary school student's academic classes. Instruction is designed to help students obtain jobs by teaching employability skills, such as searching, applying, and interviewing for a job. The classes seldom address the issues of the ongoing use of learning skills required for retaining a job. By refocusing curriculum on the basic skill requirements for successful performance and retraining on the job, students could be assisted in becoming life-long productive members of society.

As a program director or instructor, you can contribute to the success of your students' transition from school or employment training to the workplace by following the suggested plan below:

- Select targeted jobs in your community for/with students.
- Arrange to meet with local employers who offer these jobs or who project labor force vacancies in the near future. Have them identify critical job tasks for their entry-level and mid-level promotable employees, based on organizational job productivity, accuracy, and safety records.
- Conduct Literacy Task Analyses of 4 to 6 critical tasks for targeted positions through observation/interviews of competent workers.
- Develop instructional materials and lessons from the results of the Literacy Task Analyses interviews and collected job materials. (Estimate 10 hours of instruction per critical job task, 4 to 6 tasks treated in a 12-week unit of instruction.)

- After delivery of instruction, follow-up on students' job performance abilities with employers to evaluate your efforts. Observe ongoing changes at the workplace that can be used to update curriculum so that it continues to meet employers' needs.

The need for a quality workforce is not currently being met adequately by the education community. It is time for educators to rethink the Renaissance model on which our instructional model has been based. It is no longer enough to merely provide students with content area knowledge. The information explosion within our society has resulted in a world in which the amount of knowledge is constantly increasing and changing at a very rapid pace. This is especially true of the workplace, where technology upgrades are necessary to keep the U.S. competitive in a global economy.

Teaching the transferable processes which are embedded in basic skill applications, necessary for competent performance of job tasks in the workplace, prepares students for the life-long learning required for success. This does not mean teaching job content. Rather, it implies the ability to identify and provide instruction in the mental steps engaged in by competent workers as they use basic skill applications on the job.

Educators, working pro-actively as partners with the business community and applying the findings of instructional research to curriculum development at the local level, can play a major role in "retooling" the future American workforce.

© 1989 Jorie W. Philippi, Performance Plus Literacy Consultants, Springfield, VA.

FIGURE 1

Applications of Reading Skills Found in the Workplace

Vocabulary:
•Recognizing common words and meanings, task-related words with technical meanings, and meanings of common abbreviations and acronyms.

Literal Comprehension:
•Identifying factual details and specifications within text, following sequential directions to complete a task, and determining the main idea of a paragraph or section.

Locating Information Within a Text:
•Using table of contents, index, appendices, glossary, systems or subsystems.
•Locating pages, titles, paragraphs, figures, or charts needed to answer questions or solve problems.
•Skimming or scanning to determine whether or not text contains relevant information.
•Cross-referencing within and across source materials to select information to perform a routine.
•Using a completed form to locate information to complete a task.

Comparing and Contrasting:
•Combining information from multiple sources that contribute to the completion of a task.
•Selecting parts of text or visual materials to complete a task.
•Identifying similarities and differences in objects.
•Determining the presence of a defect or extent of damage.
•Classifying or matching objects by color, size, or significant marking.
•Distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information in text or visuals.

Recognizing Cause and Effect; Predicting Outcomes:
•Using common knowledge for safety.
•Applying preventative measures prior to task to minimize problems.
•Selecting appropriate course of action in emergency.

Using Charts, Diagrams, Schematics:
•Reading two- or more column charts to obtain information.
•Locating chart information at intersections of rows and columns.
•Cross-referencing charted material with text.
•Applying information from tables or graphs to locate malfunctions or select actions.
•Using flow charts and organizational charts to sequence events, arrive at a decision, or problem solve.
•Identifying components within a schematic.
•Isolating problem components in schematics, tracing to cause of problem, and interpreting symbols.
•Identifying details, labels, numbers, parts of an illustration, parts from a key or legend.
•Following sequenced illustrations as a guide.
•Interpreting three dimensional drawings of objects for assembly or disassembly.

Inferential Comprehension:
•Determining meaning of figurative, idiomatic, or technical usage of terms, using context clues as reference.
•Making inferences from text; organizing information from multiple sources into a series; interpreting codes and symbols.

(Philippi, J.W.1988 Matching Literacy to Job Training: Some Applications from Military Programs. Journal of Reading, Vol. 31, No. 7, pp.658-666. Newark, DE: Intl. Rdg. Assoc.)

FIGURE 2

Applications of Writing Skills Found in the Workplace

Production :

•Writing key technical words accurately on forms
•Spelling task-related words and abbreviations correctly.

Information Transfer (Single Step/Source) :

•Entering appropriate information onto a form.
•Recording essential information that involves more than one sentence.
•Recording essential information in phrases or simple sentence form accurately and precisely

Information Transfer (Multiple Steps/Sources) :

•Transferring numbers, codes, dates, figures from equipment or written sources onto appropriate sections of forms.
•Writing a report including necessary support documentation or classification.

Translation :

•Writing brief, descriptive accounts of activities or transactions performed.
•Outlining a situation by identifying key ideas and supporting details.
•Summarizing essential details for a written communication, using a problem-solving or news-writing heuristic.
•Selecting relevant details for a written communication.
•Stating general impressions of an event or situations as they relate to specific reporting goals.
•Summarizing events and precise dialogue in an accurate, complete, and objective manner.
•Summarizing the major points presented in a written communication.
•Generating a written communication according to a specific format (e.g., memorandum, telex, or letter).

Extension/Interpretation :

•Identifying objectives, intent, target audience, and all essential and supporting details of a written communication.
•Generating a written communication, arranging events sequentially.
•Writing brief justifications for actions taken and providing good reasons for rejecting alternative actions.
•Appraising a written communication and making adjustments to improve clarity.

(Compiled from studies by Mikulecky, 1982; Mikulecky, Ehlinger, & Meenan, 1987; U.S. Army, 1988; Philippi,1988 . Source: Philippi, J.W. 1989 Basic Skills in the Workplace, in Nadler, L. and Nadler,Z., eds., Handbook for Human Resource Development, Second Ed., College Park MD: J.Wiley & Sons. In Press.)

FIGURE 3

Applications of Computation and Problem-Solving Skills in the Workplace

Whole Numbers

•Read, write, and count single and multiple digit whole numbers.
•Add, subtract, multiply, and divide single and multiple digit numbers.
*Use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve problems with single and multiple digit whole numbers.
*Round off single and multiple digit numbers.

Fractions

•Read and write common fractions.
•Add, substract, multiply, and divide common fractions.
*Solve problems with common fractions.

Decimals

•Carry out arithmetic computations involving dollars and cents.
•Read and write decimals in one and more places.
*Round off decimals in one and more places.
•Add, substract, multiply and divide decimals in one and more places.
*Solve problems with decimals in one and more places.

Percents

•Read, write, and compute percents.

Mixed Operations

*Convert fractions to decimals, percents to fractions, fractions to percents, percents to decimals, common fractions or mixed numbers to decimal fractions, and decimal fractions to common fractions or mixed numbers.
*Solve problems by selecting and using correct order of operations.
•Perform written calculations quickly.
•Compute averages.

Measurements and Calculation

*Read numbers or symbols from time, weight, distance, and volume measuring scales.
*Use a measuring device to determine an object's weight, distance, or volume in standard (English) units or metric units.
*Perform basic metric conversions involving weight, distance, and volume.
*Use a calculator to perform basic arithmetic operations to solve problems.

Estimations

*Determine if a solution to a mathematical problem is reasonable.

[*Indicates skills directly involved with using problem-solving strategies or interpretation.]

(Compiled from studies by Greenan, 1984; Philippi, 1988. Source: Philippi, J. W. 1988. Job Literacy: Computation and Problem Solving. Report for U.S. Department of Labor and American Society for Training & Development. Alexandria, VA: ASTD